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USING HEMI-SYNC® TAPES TO REDUCE SURGERY-RELATED ANXIETY: A CASE DISCUSSION

by Arthur D. Haggerty, Ph.D. FAIS

Arthur D. Haggerty is a clinical and health psychologist with forty-five years' experience. He recently moved from North Palm Beach, Florida, to Westchester County, New York, where he now operates Stress and Chronic Pain Management, Ltd. He is presently drawing on his extensive knowledge of effective treatments for stress and chronic pain to prepare publications and develop tapes for the general public. Dr. Haggerty, a Professional Member since 1990, has a related interest in stress as a factor in the etiology of Alzheimer's disease.

Human Beings and Surgery

Ever since the earliest days of humans' existence on earth they have been fearful of surgery—deliberate cutting into the body. In the beginning, prior to today's high technology and scientific methods, surgery closely resembled the invasive trauma of battlefield wounds or other injuries. Medical research indicates that a significant amount of patient pre-, intra-, and post-surgical anxiety is still prevalent. The medical literature is replete with the wide range and severity of anxiety-related complications, even including the patient's unexpected demise.

It is impractical for surgeons to use overwhelming chemical sedation to tranquilize and then anesthetize patients since this could well jeopardize their general physiological functioning. In addition, it has been discovered that hearing is the last sense to go before we lose consciousness. In fact, patients can continue to hear even under general anesthesia! Therefore, what patients hear during their surgery can be a rich source of anxiety. For this reason the pleasant sounds of music have been used to reduce such anxiety. (The research data upon which this article is based are found in the journal reference listed at the conclusion. That reference contains fifty-four other closely related research citations.)

Numerous researchers have studied the beneficial effects of what has been termed "anxiolytic" or anxiety-reducing music. Such music must be slow, soft, and gentle enough to calm a person. Research has also shown, however, that such music must not be familiar. Such selections might have negative memories or associations which could be harmful to the patient. Reports also indicate that it is wise to avoid melody which may "program" the listener.

It is obvious that The Monroe Institute's Hemi-Sync METAMUSIC® Artist tapes meet all of these criteria to the fullest degree. Unfortunately, they are omitted from the research literature on anxiolytic music.

A Case Discussion

In my clinical practice I treated a female patient who successfully underwent neurosurgery of her neck and made a positive postoperative recovery. Three years previously she received two severe neck injuries in close succession. One occurred in an automobile accident and the second was caused by being mugged. Both caused severe cervical nerve damage with extensive pain, among other related symptoms. Despite advice from her physicians that remedial cervical neurosurgery was very urgent, the patient had such a high level of anxiety that she avoided having the operation for three years, at great risk to her whole spinal cord. She entered cognitive/behavioral relaxation therapy with me for stress and chronic pain management.

I followed my standard clinical approach: seeing her in cognitive therapy sessions to support a realistically positive attitude change and providing her with a “kit” of assorted Hemi-Sync Metamusic tapes for continuous home use between sessions. The tapes quickly and effectively enabled her to reduce her high anxiety level significantly. As this patient came closer to agreeing to undergo the urgent, necessary surgery, I created a binaural-beat stress inoculation tape for her. This content-specific tape contained a guided visual imagery scenario—a series of mental/imagination scenes of her successfully experiencing the complete surgical sequence. [See: *Topics/Healing/Stress Reduction/HSJ 1995-4 Developing Stress Hardiness by Induced Stress Inoculation - Arthur D. Haggerty*]

The patient responded so well to this therapeutic approach that she finally agreed to and underwent the surgery. She insisted on one firm stipulation with her neurosurgeon: that she be permitted to use her small tape player and wear earphones to listen to Hemi-Sync tapes throughout the whole operation. The doctor was only too happy to comply, and she progressed through the procedure without the slightest difficulty. Just as importantly, afterward this patient not only praised the effectiveness of all the tapes but also realized that she was learning how to control her anxiety and chronic pain level through her own efforts!

Summary

In conclusion, I’d like to advance the concept of a “kit” containing general and individualized audio tapes. The kit would include written instructions incorporating cognitive therapy approaches that I have used regularly in the practice of stress and chronic pain management. The Hemi-Sync system is at the heart of this approach, plus tapes with similar features that are personalized for the unique problems and symptoms of each patient. All of my patients and I have been impressed and pleased with the results.

Reference

Rodgers, Linda. "Music for Surgery." *Advances: The Journal of Mind-Body Health* 11, no. 3 (summer 1995): 49-57.

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